

getting the clue

Manufacturer—

orders denim and pocketing material, makes pattern and guide for cutting and sewing, and sends to a contractor for cutting.

Sewer—sews

together cut jeans pieces and pockets. Sewers are paid per piece. They have quotas for the number of pieces they must produce, quotas that are often set too high. Workers who can't keep up may find themselves out of a job.

Retailer—

sells the product to you.

Fabric—cotton denim, 1-1/2 yards, \$6

Cutter—cuts pieces that make up the jeans. Most cutters work at an hourly rate, often not getting overtime. If the deadline is short, they may have to work 10 hours a day, 6 days a week to complete an order.

Finisher—adds rivets, trims threads, sews on buttons. Some finishers get 1¢ for sewing on each button. At that rate, a worker would have to sew buttons on 20,600 pairs of jeans in a 40-hour week to make minimum wage.

Bottom Line —

How much did you pay for your last pair of blue jeans? And how much of that went to the workers who made those jeans? Think about it!

Life Cycle of a Blue Jean, Sweatshop Style

Clearly, not every garment manufacturer or contractor operates a sweatshop. Many follow the law and pay their employees legal wages, and some employers go well beyond the minimum requirements of the law. The situations above are representative of conditions found in a sweatshop. Costs of materials and labor and the production process vary from one manufacturer to the next.

